



Association for Behavioral  
Health and Wellness

*Advancing benefits and services  
in mental health, substance use  
and behavior change.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **ABHW Statement on The President's Opioid Commission's Final Report**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 3, 2017) – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits for over 175 million people, today issued the following statement in response to the White House Commission on Combatting Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis's final report for improving federal response to drug addiction and the opioid crisis.

The Commission's final report presented 56 recommendations for President Trump to consider in combatting the opioid crisis and drug addiction in our nation. ABHW and its members are encouraged by the Commission's final report and their efforts to address the unprecedented opioid epidemic here in the United States. We continue to stress the need for the following:

- Better alignment, of patient privacy laws specific to addiction with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) through regulation or the bipartisan bills the Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety (OPPS) Act of 2017, H.R. 3545, and the Protecting Jessica Grubb's Legacy Act (Legacy Act), S. 1850. These pieces of legislation will grant appropriate sharing of patient information that is essential for providing whole-person, coordinated care and strengthen protections of substance use disorder records which will help to ensure persons with opioid use disorder and other substance use disorders receive the safe, effective care they need.
- Expanded access and elimination of barriers to telemedicine services which would increase treatment options available to individuals with an opioid use disorder.
- Waiver approval for states to eliminate barriers to treatment resulting from the federal Institutes for Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion within the Medicaid program – the exclusion limits beneficiary access to needed and appropriate care.
- Give private health plans, Medicaid, Medicare, and PBMs access to prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs), this will help identify individuals at risk of prescription drug misuse and enable greater coordination across health care entities.

We support the Commission's recommendation for an aggressive public media campaign focused on removing the stigma associated with the disease of addiction, and reducing drug use and misuse. Through our Stamp Out Stigma campaign, ABHW will continue to address stigma of substance use disorder and break down the barriers associated with the disease of addiction and treatment.

Our member companies are at the forefront of addressing this issue and will continue to work with consumers, public health officials, the Administration, and local and community providers until we eradicate this epidemic.

ABHW Written Comments to the [President's Commission on Combatting Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, October 20, 2017](#)



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*ABHW is an association of the nation's leading behavioral health and wellness companies. These companies provide an array of services related to mental health, substance use disorders, employee assistance, disease management, and other health and wellness programs to over 175 million people in both the public and private sectors. ABHW and its member companies use their behavioral health expertise to improve health care outcomes for individuals and families across the health care spectrum. Member companies - Aetna Behavioral Health, Anthem, Beacon Health Options, Centene Corporation, Cigna, Humana Behavioral Health, New Directions Behavioral Health, Optum, and PerformCare.*